

Justice Media Awards 2023

Award winners & citations



All entries were assessed against the objectives of the Justice Media Awards, namely published works or broadcasts which:

- Promote the highest standards in legal journalism,
- Foster greater public understanding of the law, the legal system or any specific legal issue,
- Inform and educate citizens as to the roles in society of the law, the courts, law enforcement agencies, and the legal profession,
- Disclose practices or procedures needing reform so as to encourage the development and modernisation of Irish laws, courts, and law enforcement agencies, and/or
- Assist the legal profession, the judiciary, and all others involved in the administration of justice in attaining the highest professional standards.

The award categories are:

1. Print/online journalism (daily)
2. Print/online journalism (Sunday)
3. Print/online journalism (local)
4. Broadcast journalism (radio – national)
5. Broadcast journalism (radio – local)
6. Broadcast journalism (podcast)
7. Broadcast journalism (TV/video)
8. Court reporting (print/online)
9. Court reporting (broadcast)
10. Human rights/social justice reporting (print/online)
11. Human rights/social justice reporting (broadcast)
12. Environmental law/climate justice reporting (all channels)
13. International justice reporting (all channels)
14. Newcomer of the year (all channels)
15. Student journalism (all channels)

OVERALL WINNER

Winner:

Michael Doyle (The Irish Sun): *The Gerry Hutch murder trial*

The judges said:

- This journalist's reporting provides accessible, accurate legal journalism and acts as a means for ensuring greater legal literacy and understanding.
- Offering insights from inside the Special Criminal Court, this journalist supports society's understanding of the law. His work supports the continuation of the crucial principle that justice should not just be seen, but heard.

CATEGORY 1: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (DAILY)

Category winner:

John Lee (Irish Daily Mail): *The end of discretion for Gardaí: Strike out power is gone*

The judges said:

- This informative and exclusive report fosters greater public understanding of how motor offences are pursued in the State.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Naomi O'Leary (The Irish Times): *'Impunity emboldens' – the international team working to prosecute war crimes in Ukraine*

- This was an excellent, comprehensive investigate article that covered the issue of war crimes committed in Ukraine in great detail.

Mary Carolan (The Irish Times): *Coroners' Courts: Concern system is failing families*

- This was a thought-provoking article from a seasoned reporter. It highlighted significant access to justice issues in the under-resourced coroners' system.

CATEGORY 2: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (SUNDAY)

Category winner:

Daniel Murray (Business Post): *Cancer Screening: A legal dilemma*

The judges said:

- A powerful series of reports that was true public interest journalism. It provided comprehensive reporting into the cancer screening process and litigation.

Four merit certificates were awarded:

Catherine Sanz (Business Post): *Are cohabiting couples being let down by the law when a relationship ends?*

- This article provided great insight into the gaps in legal protection, reform needed and processes in the courts.

Laura Roddy (Sunday Times): *Policing big tech: How criticism of Ireland's record on handling data rule-breaking has hampered its EU regulatory role*

- This special report provided an overview of tech regulation in Ireland and the EU. It was a well-researched article, which utilised FOIs and interviews.

Killian Woods (Business Post): *Nimbys: Serial housing objectors or scapegoats?*

- This investigation provided a thought-provoking and balanced analysis of the role of human rights and social justice considerations in planning law objections.

Barry J Whyte (Business Post): *An investigation into Ireland's immigrant investor programme*

- This investigation demonstrated the highest standards of journalism, showing the need for reform in Ireland's immigrant investor programme system.

CATEGORY 3: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (LOCAL)

Category winner:

Séamus Enright (The Anglo-Celt): *Belturbet bombing remembered 50 years on*

The judges said:

- This was an emotional and well-written human interest piece. It is an excellent example of local journalism reporting on local stories, and focused on the impact on victims.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Claudia Dalby (Dublin Inquirer): *Policing road traffic and traffic related crimes*

- A series of well-written articles focusing on an under-explored area. The entry provided a good overview of the issue from varied sources.

Ellen O'Regan (The Echo): *Disability activist Evelyne Cynk hoping to move to Ireland after accepting place on UCC course*

- A thoughtful special report which provided a first-hand look into the rights of disabled people. It was impressive and important journalism.

CATEGORY 4: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO – NATIONAL)

Category winner:

Aisling Moloney (RTÉ Radio 1): *Family court system 'not fit for purpose'*

The judges said:

- A series of reports examining the effects of the justice system for victims of domestic violence.
- This was brilliant reporting which explored and explained the family courts system. The use of different voices gave a real insight into the experiences of different court-users.

One merit certificate was awarded:

Andrea Gilligan, Dee King, Heather Blackbyrne and Ross Leahy (Newstalk): *Newstalk's Lunchtime Live explores the laws around mandatory sentencing*

- This was a detailed yet well-balanced discussion into the rationale for and merits of mandatory sentencing.

CATEGORY 5: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO – LOCAL)

Category winner:

Fiona McGarry (Midwest Radio): *Searching for Sandra*

The judges said:

- This was an exceptional radio documentary, which gives a voice to the family of one of Ireland's 840 long-term missing persons.
- The production, storytelling and broad range of interviews in this report were excellent. It was an emotional piece presented in a tactful way.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Daniel Considine, Joe Finnegan and Kevin McDermott (Shannonside Northern Sound):
Pandemic Justice on The Joe Finnegan Show**

- This special report highlighted the impact of backlogs in the courts system. It was an excellent example of local radio. It provided an interesting debate on a pressing legal issue.

Sinéad Brassil (LMFM): Making a will with solicitor Elaine Byrne on The 11-1 Show with Sinéad Brassil

- With expert insights from a solicitor, this was a useful and informative broadcast piece. Going to the heart of the Justice Media Awards criteria, it helped increase the public's understanding of wills and the probate system.

CATEGORY 6: BROADCAST PODCAST (TV/VIDEO)

Category winner:

Catherine Sanz, Neville Cox and Carolyn Goulden (Law on Trial, Business Post): *Lawfare and legal threats: Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC on defending pro-democracy campaigners around the world*

The judges said:

- An excellent podcast relating the experiences and views of a leading human rights lawyer.
- This was a fantastic, insightful interview. By examining how the law has been weaponised against the most vulnerable, it shines a light on the dark side of working in this sector.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Hannah McCarthy, Ronan Kelly and the RTÉ Documentary on One team (RTÉ Radio 1): *The Taliban and Me*

- This on-the-ground reporting, telling the stories of individuals impacted by the return of the Taliban, provided for an impactful piece of broadcast. It offered a deeper understanding of the inequality and difficulties that ordinary civilians in Afghanistan now face.

Suzanne Brennan, Declan Conlon, Aideen Finnegan and Conor Pope (The Irish Times): *Will Enoch Burke get out of jail for Christmas?*

- While covering one of the most popular news items over the last 12 months, this report offered excellent interviews, a concise summary of events and a thoughtful discussion on civil contempt.

CATEGORY 7: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (TV/VIDEO)

Category winner:

Rita O'Reilly, Oisín McGreal, Laura Dowling, Richard Downes, Aidan McGuinness, Shirley Bradshaw and Dave Perry (Prime Time, RTÉ): *Christian Brothers: Denial*

The judges said:

- Detailing legal tactics of the Christian Brothers on civil claims for historical child sexual abuse, this was a captivating and informative report highlighting gaps in the law to allow victims of sexual abuse to access justice.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Gwyneth Jones, Denise O'Connor, Lyndsey Telford and Chris Thornton (BBC Northern Ireland): *Survivors' Voices*

- This was a harrowing special report following two survivors of sexual abuse and their experiences of the court system. It was an exceptional piece of journalism, which forced real change.

Ciaran Bradley & Mostafa Darwish (Irish Mirror): *Ireland's housing crisis*

- This was an excellent four-part series exposing issues relating to the homeless crisis in Ireland.

CATEGORY 8: COURT REPORTING – PRINT/ONLINE

Category winner:

Shane Phelan (Irish Independent): *Unlawful court order used to take children away from their mother in tug-of-love case*

The judges said:

- This was an exclusive report revealing an unlawful order made by a former Master of the High Court.
- It was excellent investigative reporting from this seasoned reporter. Amplifying the voices of those impacted, it highlighted steps taken to reduce the risk of it happening again.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

James Fogarty (Roscommon Herald): *Judge condemns online abuse in dog bite case*

- Delivering a special report outlining a dog-biting incident and the subsequent case that followed, the reporting was noted for its unusual topic. This local journalist stood out for providing a clear account of the details of the case.

Sean Murray (Irish Examiner): *The Regency Murder Trial*

- This series of reports detailing the case of a gangland murder provided an interesting angle to the Hutch trial at the Special Criminal Court. It was very readable reporting.

CATEGORY 9: COURT REPORTING (BROADCAST)

Category winner:

Daniel Considine (Shannonside FM): *In the Line of Duty*

The judges said:

- This was an excellent report covering of harrowing details of what was clearly an extremely emotive case.
- This high calibre court reporting, on a respected regional radio station, provided a comprehensive and clear overview of the key days in the trial for the murder of Garda Colm Horkan.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Frank Greaney (Today FM): *Cruel Garda jailed for coercive control*

- This was excellent court reporting from a stalwart journalist. His piece explained the concept of coercive control and its impact on victims made for compelling listening.

Deborah Naylor (Virgin Media News): *State witness Jonathan Dowdall takes the stand*

- This reporting was clear, concise, and provided a detailed overview of the evidence given during a case that received significant media attention and enormous public interest.

CATEGORY 10: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING (PRINT/ONLINE)

Category winner:

Shamim Malekmian (Dublin Inquirer): *After Coming Here Without His Parents Looking for Safety, a Migrant Child Is Left to Live Alone Among Adults*

The judges said:

- This was a thought-provoking and well-researched article on a highly topical issue, which makes a strong case for reform of the asylum system.
- It highlighted the issues of underage migrants sharing accommodation rooms with adults and the need for reform to protect vulnerable minors.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Maria Delaney, Michelle Hennessy and Martin Beanz Warde (Noteworthy & The Journal): *Blind Justice: How the justice system is leaving Travellers isolated and traumatised.*

- This was an excellent series highlighting the systematic deficiencies faced by members of the Traveller Community in accessing justice in the housing and prison system. This represents the highest standards of journalism with focus on the areas of reform needed.

Clodagh Finn (Irish Examiner): *The State destroyed a woman's family; her son pieced it back together again*

- This is a beautifully written and well-researched piece about an attempt to find family members "lost" within the context of one of the State's most challenging historical issues. This report is comprehensive, and the images of the various documents assist the reader to understand the matter.

CATEGORY 11: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING (BROADCAST)

Category winner:

Seán Mac Giolla Phádraig, David Nally and Liam O'Brien (RTÉ Documentary on One): *Blackrock Boys*

The judges said:

- A strong and emotive documentary exploring the human impact of sexual abuse.
- This report was an excellent investigation into the difficulties in securing a legacy sexual abuse conviction and the lasting effect on victims.

One merit certificate was awarded:

Guy Grandjean, Gwyneth Jones, Mandy McAuley & Chris Thornton (BBC Northern Ireland): *Police, WhatsApp & Whistleblowers*

- This was a special report that epitomises good investigative journalism. It was an intriguing story about members of the PSNI who alleged that they were the subject of harassment and false allegations following whistleblowing. It highlighted the need for reform within the PSNI to protect whistleblowers.

CATEGORY 12: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE REPORTING (ALL CHANNELS)

Category winner:

Niall Sargent, Rory Winters, Luke Butterly, Tommy Greene and Ella McSweeney (Noteworthy): *Factory Farm*

The judges said:

- This report fostered a greater understanding of an otherwise under-reported environmental issue.
- It was an extremely comprehensive and detailed investigation into cross border trade and the potential forging of documents, while highlighting likely devastating consequences for the environment.

One merit certificate was awarded:

Caoimhe Gordon (Irish Independent): *Corporate Ireland talks about climate targets, but how do we assess their progress?*

- This was an excellent series of articles, which examined in an accessible and informative way, the complexities surrounding the aim for a just transition in climate change policy.

CATEGORY 13: ENVIRONMENTAL LAW/CLIMATE JUSTICE REPORTING (ALL CHANNELS)

Category winner:

Peter O'Dwyer (Business Post): *A 'dystopian hellscape': How China created modern-day concentration camps for its ethnic minorities.*

The judges said:

- A hard-hitting and well-researched piece into the plight of the Uyghur Muslims, which had the effect of bringing their fight into national discourse.
- This excellent report draws attention to the human rights abuses at Chinese forced labour camps and the goods being imported into the EU. It includes an interesting discussion about enforcing international human rights obligations before Irish courts.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Naomi O’Leary (The Irish Times): *Council of Europe challenges Britain over Troubles amnesty Bill.*

- This seasoned journalist’s reporting fostered greater public understanding of the European Court of Human Rights. It highlighted the importance of the Court by referencing Ireland's role in its establishment, its jurisdiction and cases involving the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill.

Aoife Barry, Michelle Hennessy and Nicky Ryan (The Explainer Podcast, The Journal): *The Explainer: How have abortion laws changed in the US since Roe V Wade was overturned?*

- This was an informative explainer which allowed the listener to understand the issues arising from the reversal of Roe v Wade, and how such decisions trigger laws in some US States.

CATEGORY 14: NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR

Category winner:

Roman Shortall (The Ditch)

The judges said:

- This journalist’s impactful investigative series on the legal issues within Ireland’s planning process has since influenced the news and political agenda.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Patrick O’Donoghue (The Sunday Times (Ireland))

- A journalist who has stood out for his ability to deliver an interesting and informative stories while tackling timely legal topics.

Tadgh McNally (The Journal)

- A newcomer who has shown skilled, engaging writing to cover a wide range of societal issues.

CATEGORY 15: BEST STUDENT JOURNALISM

Category winner:

Caoimhe Looney (Flirt FM): *The Right to Protesting and Housing*

The judges said:

- This was an interesting piece exploring one of the most topical issues facing the nation - the right to housing and the right to protest.
- This journalist has a captivating interview style. The journalist had conducted significant research in advance to ensure her listeners were all the better informed.

One merit certificate was awarded:

Emer Moreau (The Journal): *FactCheck: Is the protocol stopping Jewish people in the North from practising their religion?*

- An excellently written and thought-provoking piece on the potential impact of the Northern Ireland Protocol on Jewish people in the North. This article was well written and researched.
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